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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004544

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [IRAQI ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI DEFENSE MINISTER TELLS ITALIANS THAT
ELECTIONS SHOULD BE POSTPONED

Classified By: DCM Emil Skodon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. In November 29 meetings with Italian government officials, Iraq Defense Minister Hazim al Shalam expressed security concerns about the upcoming elections in Iraq, going so far as to advocate their postponement. Italian officials told DCM that Italy will continue to support the Iraqi election process, including the choice of January 30 as the election date, in accordance with UNSC 1546 and the decisions of the sovereign Iraqi government. End summary.

2. (C) Achille Amerio, the new Diplomatic Advisor to Defense Minister Martino, called DCM at Martino's request to relay concerns expressed by Iraqi Defense Minister al Shalam in a private conversation with his Italian counterpart on the margins of a November 29 official visit to Rome. Al Shalam reportedly told Martino that January 30 was too early to hold elections, in his opinion. There was, he claimed, evidence of "infiltration" by Iran, and a risk that ballots could be manipulated. Holding elections on the 30th, he said, would "play into the hands" of Syria and Iran. Al Shalam said that he would raise these concerns when he travels to Washington in the meantime, however, in order to speak directly about postponing the elections/ only took note of al S meeting with the Iraqis, Amerio to relay those issues such as forged ID cards inquiry, Bisogniera responsible for security. that Italy's position respect to the political should be based on UNSC to the sovereign government the dates for elections. continue to support whatever decision that government makes in terms of timing for the elections.

BAGHDAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

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